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SUBJECT: SLOVAK GOVERNMENT RENEWS INTEREST IN TIP

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 817

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 953

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The new National Coordinator for Fight against Trafficking in Persons held his first inter-ministerial Expert Group meeting on the subject. The Ministry of Interior earmarked SKK 2 million (USD 74,000) for TIP activities in 2007. The GOS passed an amendment on the law covering the stay of victims of trafficking and asylum seekers. Other TIP updates include the Slovak Catholic Church joining the anti-TIP crusade, more returning Slovak TIP victims using the local network of protective NGOs, and Chinese trafficking victims turning up in Slovak asylum centers. Though some planning and expertise were lost during several months of inactivity, the GOS is again actively engaged on TIP efforts. END SUMMARY.

NEW NATIONAL COORDINATOR PLANS BUDGET, PROGRAM FOR 2007

[1](#)2. (SBU) National Coordinator for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Interior (MOI) State Secretary Jozef Bucek (ref A), chaired the first meeting of

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the new Expert Group on TIP on December 20. The group is comprised of officials from the deputy director level to the state secretary level from the MOI, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister's Office, General Prosecutor's, three NGOs, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The group is designed to have the political weight to enforce measures to combat TIP. However, it has less expertise and intends to meet less often, possibly as little as once a year, than the previously established Working Group on TIP.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The MOI budget for TIP for 2007 will be SKK 2 million (USD 74,000), approximately the same as for 2006 (the increase in the USD amount is due to exchange rate fluctuations). At the meeting, the members of the Expert Group discussed alternative sources of funding for TIP-related NGOs, including the state NGO funding mechanism (ref B) and EU monies.

[1](#)4. (SBU) MOI announced that it will fund one local NGO, Dotyk ("Touch"), to provide protective services for TIP victims as a year-long pilot project in 2007. This NGO, founded with the help of Slovak first lady Mrs. Silvia Gasparovicova, has experience in aiding victims of domestic violence and has its own safehouses with security guards. In 2008, the MOI-NGO cooperation should be expanded to a network of NGOs, as previously planned. The MOI also presented a proposal to the Expert Group to develop a systematic educational awareness

program for the different categories of government employees who might come into contact with TIP victims, for example police officers and employment case workers.

15. (SBU) The point of contact on TIP issues at the working level within the MOI will be Col. Jozef Hlinka, head of the Security Strategy Department. He has already traveled to the Czech Republic to study their model for combating TIP. For the first few months of 2007, he plans a revision of Slovakia's National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons to bring into line with EU-wide norms and Council of Europe conventions.

16. (SBU) In a separate meeting in December, UNODC representatives met with Bucek and Interior Minister Robert Kalinak. MOI confirmed its interest in the joint GOS-UNODC anti-trafficking project. The UNODC budget for this 18-month effort is SKK 9 million (USD 340,000).

NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR FOREIGN VICTIMS HAS SOME PROBLEMS

17. (SBU) In December parliament passed, and the President signed into law, an amendment to the law on asylum seekers which affects permits for trafficking victims to remain in the country. Coming into force at the start of 2007, the law allows for victims of serious crimes, including human trafficking, to receive a renewable 40-day "tolerated-stay" permit. One trafficking expert criticized the details of the amendment. To be in line with international standards, she explained, the initial 40-day stay should be a reflection period in which the TIP victim receives the benefit of the doubt and is under no obligation to talk with police. However, according to the expert, the wording of the law gives the police investigation priority and gives the police the right not to re-new the permit if the victim chooses not

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to cooperate, or stops cooperating, with the police, thereby creating the possibility that the victim will be left in the status of illegal immigrant and thus subject to deportation. UNODC intends to conduct an expert legal assessment of this amendment.

18. (U) Other provisions of the amendment widen the categories for which asylum seekers can claim protection. Slovakia's asylum law will now cover those who face the death penalty and cruel or humiliating treatment. However, the local UNHCR office noted that Slovakia, like other European countries, is lowering its protection for asylum seekers down to EU standards from the higher level of international conventions.

SLOVAK CATHOLIC CHURCH WANTS TO HELP TIP VICTIMS

19. (SBU) After urging from the Ambassador in a November meeting, the Catholic Archbishop for the Bratislava-Trnava Archdiocese (covering western and central Slovakia) agreed to support anti-TIP efforts. Previously, the church had ignored the issue. A working level brainstorming session between the Archbishop's office, IOM, and Emboff took place in mid-December. The meeting covered potential training and outreach programs. The Archbishop's rep noted that the message to help trafficking victims was coming strong and clear from the Vatican and that the Archbishop was completely onboard. Emboff will follow-up in January, seeking concrete commitments.

110. (SBU) A local trafficking expert noted that the Catholic Archdiocese of Kosice (covering eastern Slovakia) made some outreach efforts leading up to the World Cup held June-July in Germany to warn Slovaks seeking temporary employment during the games to be aware of the potential for human trafficking.

MORE RETURNED SLOVAK VICTIMS USE PROTECTIVE NETWORK

¶11. (SBU) The Bratislava IOM office reported increased usage of the local NGO protective network by Slovak victims of trafficking on their return home. The local IOM representative believes that the increase comes from a greater awareness of the network, not from an upswing in the number of Slovak victims trafficked abroad. She also mentioned that, in at least one case, placing a trafficking victim in the same shelter with domestic violence victims had not worked out well due to the different psychological needs of the victims.

ADD CHINA TO THE LIST OF VICTIMS TRANSSHIPPED VIA SLOVAKIA

¶12. (SBU) The IOM office also informed Emboff that, based on interviews via translator at Slovak asylum centers, human traffickers are now attempting to transship Chinese victims across Slovakia.

COMMENT

¶13. (SBU) After a multi-month lull as the new government administration settled into office, GOS officials have started to pay attention to TIP again. Despite the fact that some of the projects arranged by the previous National Coordinator were not completed, the new National Coordinator appears to be taking his role seriously and is moving forward on practical steps. External TIP experts feel the MOI commitment is sincere, but fear that the loss of expertise from the previous TIP structure will cause some unnecessary inefficiencies. The fact that the new Expert Group may meet only once a year could prove problematic to interministerial buy-in. However, that could be overcome if Col. Hlinka has the necessary communication skills and efficacy to get things done at the working level and State Secretary Bucek provides the political weight as National Coordinator. For our part, we are happy to see the ball rolling again within the GOS and the addition of the local Catholic Church. We will increase our meetings at the GOS working level, now that those roles have been designated, to do our part to help turn the renewed interest into effective policies and procedures.

VALLEE